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Forward

Some folks have called me an author (thank you), but I think that is the wrong title. I think it should be something more like "an old codger" who had a lot of spare time, and put some of his thoughts and memories on paper. Then had to try something new, had a book published that had some mediocre success in our community.

I have been asked if I am going to write another book. If I had the gift of "flowery" words and correct English I might be more enthused. I grew up in Auburn Junction and probably didn't pay the attention in school English classes that I should have, so my English may not conform to the rules of proper expression.

I would never be able to write fiction and I never had a knack for research, so these stories are just incidents that have been a part of my life.

You may relate to some of these stories or you may find some of these interesting or even a little humorous. There may be some that decided they are just the "ranting's of a foolish old man", but so be it . . .

I would like to acknowledge all the people mentioned in these stories. They have been a wonderful part of my life. I especially would like to thank my niece, Marisa Kennedy, for editing my copy and preparing it for printing. Photo art on the back cover was done by my nephew, Sam Smith, and has appeared in two previous books.

Enjoy!!!!

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The Word Processor

Why is it that certain people think they can master any new gadget that comes along?

I had been doing some typing on an old Royal typewriter that I had bought at the county auction for fifteen bucks. It was an improvement over the portable I had been using simply because it was electric.

When I bought it I thought I should be able to whip out typing in fine style but I found there were several minor things wrong with it. For instance, among other things, the carriage return wouldn't work, the margin tabs were useless, it needed a new ribbon and the keys stuck.

I am strictly a "hunt and peck" typist and making mistakes is one of my strong qualities. My typing ends up with the copy either spotted with white out erasure or corrected with a ball point pen. In other words . . . it stinks.

Then I saw an advertisement for word processors. All you do is just write everything out on a screen, correct all the mistakes while still on the screen and then print out a perfect copy.

That sounded simple enough so I stopped in a couple of places to look at them. The sales ladies were very pleasant and demonstrated how the machine would do almost everything except turn handspring. The trouble was, she did it so fast that I had no idea what she was doing or how she did it. She went on to explain that the manual would show just exactly how to perform any function. She ended up by saying kids use them all the time.

So I bought one.

The first thing I learned was that those kids must have had the IQ of an Edison or Einstein. It would have taken someone of that caliber to interpret the index of the instruction manual.

Well, I unpacked and set up the machine and then took a good close look at the keyboard. I did find all the typewriter keys. That was easy as each had its little letter or number the same as a typewriter. But what about all those keys marked "reloc", "search,", "center", "quantity", " RMF", "embed" and all those keys marked with symbols?

I could see it would take a lot of study time with that instruction manual. I began to wonder whether I would ever have enough nerve to push the "ON" button!

Oh yes, I did find that finally.

I though it might be a good idea to at least look over the manual before I turned it on., One of the first pages was a list of things you should not do. This worried me a little and made me wonder if the stupid thing might blow up if I touched the wrong key. After reading them over, the no-no's turned out to be just common sense precautions such as . . . don't work on it with a screwdriver, don't drop any metal objects in it, don't set it in a hot place and be careful not to spill any soft drinks on it. Even I could understand that, so I moved on the index.

The first chapter is the index was headed "Before Using." I though I should study that pretty carefully. I didn't want to ruin it before I goat a chance to write something. Turning to the pages indicated, I found, showed how to plug in the keyboard, how to adjust the legs of the keyboard and how to plug in the power cord. I began to think this wouldn't be so bad. Even I knew how to plug in a power cord!

The next item under chapter one was "names of the parts." This was a little more complicated, but they had pictures and diagrams and names that showed the various parts. With pictures and names anyone should be able to identify the parts. I could recognize such items as the keyboard, the screen the power switch, the keyboard legs and the cable plug, but after that I got lost. Such items as acoustic filter, eject button, floppy disc drive, access indicator and disc storage were all Greek to me so I knew I would have to do a lot more reading.

There were several other items under chapter one such as changing ribbons, changing correction tape and changing daisy wheel. These I just skipped over. After all, this was a new machine so I shouldn't have to do any of that for at least awhile.

One of the headings was "Word Processor Mode". This was what I bought the machine for, so I thought I ought to find the information and give it a good study. This information was a little easier to understand. It explained the typewriter mode and the word processor mode. Then it went on to explain how to tune in each of these modes. The first instruction was to push on the power switch. I had to do it sometime, so I gave it a gentle push. I felt a little like jumping back after I had pushed it, but nothing blew up so I read on. The next instruction said to push the menu switch. This was a little puzzling. Why would I want to see a menu on the screen? I felt sure it meant something besides food so I gave it a push. The so-called menu flashed on the screen and listed such functions as "typewriter mode", "create new text" and several other functions. I didn't understand most of them so I decided "create new text" would be a good place to start.

This seemed to work out as everything I typed showed up on the screen. By playing around and reading the manual I found out how to correct mistakes.

I typed several lines and then checked the printing instructions, put in some paper and pressed the print key. It printed just fine but it ran the printing clear off the right side of the paper.

I went back to the manual to find out how to set the printing margins. After a lot of reading and trying I could finally print a pretty respectable looking copy.

So far, that is the extent of what I can do. I did learn one other thing real fast after losing a full screen of typing: NEVER turn the machine off unless you want to clear everything in the memory!

There are so many things you can do with this equipment, but I think I better stick to the basic typing and printing mode before I try anything else. Sometimes I feel sure I should have bought an accordion. It probably wouldn't have been any harder to master. But, who knows . . . maybe even I can learn to use some of the other functions sometime in the future.

How Old Are You?

I think it was George Burns who said "We have to grow older but we don't have to grow old." If this philosophy works for him, it should work for any of us who might be getting a little along in years.

Some people might say we should act our age, but what is our age? Is it the years on the calendar or is it how we think and feel? We should have learned that it takes a few aches and pains to make us realize how much we enjoy the pleasant things in our lives.

Maybe we have to do things a little slower, and if the activities are a little too strenuous we can always watch the younger people and think "just with till they get our age and they will slow down, too." It is surprising how much this helps to relieve the envy.

The younger generation might think of us as getting a little senile or in our second childhood or even that we have just plain "lost our marbles". Hey! We shouldn't let this worry us. We do what we can and have just as much fun as anyone else.

We have to admit that it takes us a little longer to get started in the mornings. After we get the creaks out of our joints we still have to polish the bifocals so we can polish our dentures and load them with adhesive to keep them from falling out when we cough or sneeze. Next we have to clean and adjust our "third ear" so we can hear the morning news on the TV. Then while we are resting from all this exertion we

have time to think that we are very luck to be living at a time when all these options are available.

We are ready now, for that long trip out to the street to get the morning paper. After a glass of juice, a cup of coffee, a donut and the paper we are ready to start the day, depending on whether or not the news in the paper has been too depressing. If your mind is still a little foggy, working the crossword puzzle will clear that up in fine shape.

Since we don't have to punch a time clock or get the kids off to school, watches and clocks are not too important. Maybe we should have a watch around for doctor appointments, but otherwise we can just switch on the television to see what program is on and then consult the TV Guide for the time the program comes on. This will give us the time within a half hour and that is close enough.

It isn't a very smart idea to subscribe to newspapers for more than eight weeks at time or magazines for more than a year, even though there is usually a nice savings for two or three year subscriptions. We have to remember that they probably won't deliver mail at our next address.

We might worry about getting a little forgetful, but if we try remembering things that happened in the past we are sure to find that the pleasant memories far outweigh the unpleasant ones. If we need to know something really important there are all kinds of reference books available where we can find the answer. If you can't find it in these books you can find other older people who will be glad to set you straight on most any subject.

You might think this a little foolish, but here is one good way to pass the time when you go on a trip with your son and daughter-in-law.

For the first half hour be content to just sit and enjoy the scenery. Then start asking, "Are we there yet." You can keep this up until you pass the last McDonald's and start with "I'm hungry." Next, after you have passed the last rest area for twenty miles you can start in with "I have to go to the bathroom." This you can keep up until your son turns into the next rest area and then just say "I don't have to go so I will just wait in the car."

If your son has a sense of humor he will probably remember some of the trips he took with his parents when he was small. Then again, if he doesn't, he will probably never ask his dad to go along on any more trips.

There are so many enjoyable things we can still do so why worry about how we will feel tomorrow? Laugh and enjoy today!!

Advertising

Advertising is the backbone of American business, or so they say, and I can't argue with that. Newspapers, magazines, radio and TV must solicit ads to pay for all the shows they broadcast and merchants must advertise to sell their products. But did you ever really think about some of the ads we see everyday on our TV sets?

Some are actually half minute drams and sometimes more enjoyable than the regular programs. There are some that become popular with the viewers and are quoted on most of the talk shows. Remember "Where's the Beef? and the latest that most of the stand up comics are having a field day with, "I've fallen and I can't get up." This could also be used to describe the American dollar!

If you are so inclined, you can call an 800 number and talk to a psychic and she will check her cards and set you straight on most anything you want to know. Or, you can call another 800 number and get all the winning numbers of future lotteries. I probably should call as I haven't been doing so well in the lottery lately. But then, what in the world would I do with all my winnings?

You can even call a matchmaker and she will set you up on a blind date. That might be a little more risky than playing the lottery!

Some ads are very instructive. I have always had trouble closing plastic bags and I finally found out why. All I needed to do was draw a happy face on my first finger and thumb and my problem was solved.

One commercial shows some stupid guy shows some

stupid guy buying a bucket of chicken and then falling into an open manhole, not once . . . but twice. I have tried to understand just what this ad is trying to tell us. I can't see how this would make anyone want to rush right out and buy a bucket of chicken. Maybe I missed something that only the well educated can understand or maybe the ad agency mixed this up with one they were doing on jaywalking.

How do you decide which pain killer to buy when all the commercials say that they are recommended by doctors and hospitals, they are new and improved and they are the most effective on the market without a prescription? If you listen to too many of these ads, you get confused and, nine times out of ten, buy the time you've made a decision the pain will be gone. Or else making that decision will cause you to need something more potent than they have to offer.

One commercial for a cereal seems to me that the ad writers must have come up with a snappy retort from the eater to his wife and then had to name the cereal to fit that retort. Sounds a little "nutty" to me.

Most cereals are advertised as having all the necessary vitamins that a person needs each day. Then they compare how many bowls of other cereals you must eat to get the same number of vitamins you get if you just eat one bowl of the advertised product. With the countless number of different cereals on the shelves of today's grocery stores, I would suspect that very few shoppers read or understand the lists of ingredients printed on the boxes. I would also suspect that most cereals are purchased because of the name or the picture on the box.

What happened to the plain old rolled oats that we grew up on when we were kids? We could buy it in a plain paper

bag at the general store. As I recall, this had to be boiled for a half or three-quarters of an hour before it was edible. Any that was left over after feeding six people was put in a bread pan and after it was cold could be sliced off like bread. A slice of this sprinkled with brown sugar and maybe some fruit, covered with milk fresh from the cow, made dessert for dinner.

I will have to admit that oatmeal is much easier to prepare than it was back then, but it still seems as though something is missing from the taste.

But I can't argue that advertising does not sell products!

Funny Mishaps

Mishaps can happen to anyone and there is usually something to laugh about in most of them. Of course, there is that first reaction of fear wondering whether the person has been hurt. I may have a peculiar "quirk" but I just can't keep from laughing when I see that nothing has been bruised except, maybe their pride.

I even laugh at my own mishaps, especially if someone else is around and saw it happen.

You know, nine times out of ten a good hearty laugh is contagious even to the victim of the mishap, but you better be extra careful of that tenth time or you might end up with a retaliation of some sort.

There is another peculiar thing about these mishaps. Even though they might have happened thirty or forty years ago, when they come to mind, you still feel like you have to laugh. Maybe not the foot stomping, doubled over, tear causing laugh that happened originally, but still, that remembrance causes a grin or a smile and maybe even a short chuckle.

I have been one of the fortunate persons who married a girl (we called her Mom) who had a sense of humor, besides a lot of pride. We both had a lot of laughs over mishaps that happened to us over the years.

One example was the time Mom's brother and his wife, Pete and Ann, purchased a new motor home and invited us to go with them on a trip to the upper peninsula of Michigan and up the Keweenaw peninsula. When we got to Copper Harbor

there was a nice path that went through the woods and on to Lake Superior, so we decided to go back and see the lake.

It was a nice cleared path, but about halfway back there was a small stream and the only way to cross was a log or by wading. Pete and Ann made it across the log in fine shape and started on towards the lake. Mom started across that log very carefully, but made a miscue about halfway across and very gracefully sat down in about a foot and a half of ice cold water. When I saw she wasn't hurt I couldn't help myself and doubled over laughing. It only took a few seconds to see that this wasn't the right thing to do, so I decided I better go out and help her. I walked out on the log and reached down for her hand and before I realized it, I was sitting beside her in that cold stream. I would swear she pulled my in on purpose, but of course she denied it!

We took one look at each other, sitting in that water and started laughing like a couple of idiots. When we could stop laughing for a few minutes we thought we better head back to the motor home and get into some dry clothes.

The walk back was cold and miserable with water sloshing in our shoes and wet to the waist, but that didn't stop us from laughing whenever we looked at each other!

Pete and Ann came back and wondered what had happened. When we told them we all started laughing like a bunch of teenagers. Naturally, Mom's story and mine were not exactly the same, but you can't censure a guy for trying to save a little face.

Another time Mom and I were bow hunting deer up near Vanderbilt, Michigan. Being the big know-it-all hunter, I had to explain how important it was to stay well hidden while waiting for deer. She was very attentive but I don't

think she was listening to one thing I said.

When we went out the next morning, I took her to a blind we had built near the edge of a big swamp and told her I would pick her up about noon to go back to camp and get dinner. I went on down the road about a quarter mile to another blind.

About noon I came down the road and whistled, then sat down by a tree to wait. When I saw her coming I couldn't understand why she looked so different. As she got closer I took one look and started laughing. She had pine boughs and wood ferns stuck in every pocket. In her hat, in her belt, down her collar and even in her boot tops. She started laughing and I bet we laughed for five full minutes. When we finally stopped laughing she said something like, "Well you told me camouflage was important." That started us laughing again.

We kept it up all the way back to camp. I was a little embarrassed that the other hunters might see an old experienced deer hunter coming down the road laughing like a fool, but we made it without meeting anyone.

Then there were the trips up to Black Creek, near Hamilton, to spear suckers. When you are wading in a stream full of slippery rocks, wearing hip boots - at night - holding a lantern in one hand and a spear in the other, you are bound to have mishaps. Nothing serious but something to laugh about.

Cy McNabb went with us a lot, and he, being much older seemed to be accident prone. Mom was too polite to laugh and would "shush" me if I couldn't control myself.

After we dropped Cy off at his house we would both mention things that happened that night and start laughing. Very seldom did we come home from those trips in dry clothes.

Just recently I was watching an amateur well driller and his wife drilling a two inch hole for a new well. There were down about twenty feet and were taking the drill out when I noticed a strange look on the driller's face.

I asked him what was the matter and he said, "I dropped my wrench down the hole."

Now, a mishap like that would make anyone laugh. Not because he dropped the wrench, but because of the look on his face! He has a sense of humor and after the initial embarrassment wore off he also had to laugh.

Luckily he got the wrench out on the first try.

When I moved back to Auburn I made half of my two car garage into a small wood working shop to make some craft items. The first thing I did was get my left forefinger in my table saw. I saw right off that the gash was too big for a band aid so I wrapped it up in a towel and drove over to the hospital emergency room. They cleaned it up and put in seven stitches, then wrapped it with a big bandage and told me to come back in a couple of weeks to take those stitches out.

Now, a mishap like that is a little embarrassing so when someone asked what happened I told them I was tamping down the ashes in my pipe and burned my finger. This usually brought a few laughs as well as a few comments like "you better quit smoking" or "that should teach you not to smoke."

About a year later one of the county association's was giving free diabetes checks and my daughter-in-law was working with them. I went up to get the check. When she pricked my finger to get the drop of blood needed, she just couldn't squeeze a drop out. I had to laugh at how hard she tried. She pricked another finger and finally finished the check. She also invited me to their house for supper that night. This

was too good to miss so I wrapped both fingers in big white bandages and when I walked in and the first thing she said was "Did you get into your saw again?", I had to laugh. I was sure she wanted to punch me in the nose but she also started laughing!

When you get old you tend to worry more about every little ache and pain. For example, I woke up in the middle of night awhile back and had this terrible pain in my left chest. My first thought was, "Is this the BIG one?" I started rubbing my chest and discovered that I had left a cigarette lighter in my pajama pocket and had been I had been laying on that! I sat on the side of the bed and laughed at myself for such a stupid trick as that!

There are so many things that can happen to cause a good laugh. It really isn't necessary to watch those high paid comics you see on the TV when there are so many things that happen every day that has a funny side! Look for them and have a good laugh!!!!

People Watching

Fair week is the big week for the people of DeKalb county. Almost everyone who attends the fair has their favorite must-see exhibits, but there are so many things to see that it is impossible to cover everything in one day or one evening. If you have a conversation with someone it usually leads to, "Did you see such and such up at the fair?" Then you have to go back up to see what they were referring to.

I especially enjoy Old Settler's Day. Maybe that is because seeing so many older people makes a person feel a lot younger.

Then there is "people watching". This has always been a pleasant pastime for me and the fair is a wonderful place to pursue this hobby. The biggest trouble I have is when I recognize a face I can't put a name to. A little embarrassing at times.

You just can't stare at people too long or they might take offense. For example, I noticed a well endowed lady coming towards me and I guess I stared too long. The look she gave me would freeze ice. She didn't give me a chance to explain that I was only trying to read the printing on the front of her T-shirt.

Another time I was waiting on some friends and saw this lady coming straight towards me with what I thought might have been a refreshing soft drink. It made me wonder why anyone would offer me a drink unless, maybe, I looked a little worn out, which was closer to the truth. Then I noticed I was standing in front of a trash barrel and she only wanted to get

rid of an empty cup. Needless to say, I moved away from that barrel.

The little tots in strollers are fun to watch. While their parents were checking out all the displays they would just sit there with expressions on their faces that looked to me like they couldn't care less for big pumpkins, vegetables, seed corn or art work. When they get to our age, I'm sure they will take more interest.

Yardsticks were a popular give away item and a good percentage of the people who visited the Industrial tent were walking around with them. Made me wonder how many would change their vote because some political party gave them a yardstick. I shouldn't say anything. I brought one home with me!

DeKalb county people have an odd but nice habit. Even though they might have had a good visit with someone that same day, when they meet at the fair they always have to stop and have a chat. Some people might say that DeKalb people are not friendly, but I would have to argue about that.

The midway had the usual rides, games of chance, food booths and raffles. Some of then had been updated but you could still find the old stand-by's. The stuffed toys seemed to be larger and some of the stands had large plastic balls as prizes. Little kids were carrying balls that they couldn't get their arms around. It was fun to watch them struggle.

There was one stand that I had never seen before. This was the fish tank. It was just a big plastic tank filled with catfish and fish poles with a noose instead of a hook. Plastic baskets lined the tank for any fish you might catch. There was a large crowd around the tank watching the fishermen, or women. I couldn't resist. I had to try.

I really thought it would be easy but I was soon fooled. It turned out that I didn't have any better luck fishing there than I did the day before when I had spent about four hours in a boat. Made me wonder whether I had better quit fishing and take up something like knitting.

It seems like all fair-goers have to eat at least one meal at the saddle barn. Even though you might have to wait in a long line to get in, the good home-cooked food is worth the wait. It's also a good place to people-watch. I watched one young boy, maybe four or five years old, eat about half a hot dog and then soak the other half in catsup, wrap it up very carefully and shove it in his pocket. Made me wonder what his mother would think when she found out about it!

The parade on Saturday morning is the highlight of the fair. It has been kind of a ritual for our family, relatives and in-laws, to watch the parade together. My brother-in-law loads up his pickup with chairs, blankets and refreshments and goes up on Main Street early to reserve a front row seat. This year he had to park the truck about two blocks down Cedar Street. The rest of our group collected enough candy to last them for about a week.

After the parade was over we gathered up all the chairs and blankets and started for the pickup. There is something about a parade that brings out the kid in almost anyone. I don't know just how it started, but one of our group started kicking a can and it wasn't long before we were all playing kick the can. I had to laugh, seeing grandmothers, grandfathers, mothers, fathers, cousins and kids kicked a stupid can down the middle of Cedar Street and having the time of their lives.

The DeKalb Fair does that to people!!!

Now it's over for another year but I would wager that everyone who attended will have some little incident they will talk about for a long while. I will have to do my people watching for the next year in the Ft. Wayne malls.

Class of '31 Reunion, 1988

I have been asked to recount some of the things I remember about our high school days. I am sure all of you have your own memories and I hope I don't bore you too much with some of mine.

As I remember our freshman class, we were a little cocky. We had made it to high school so we mush be pretty smart. Then we ran up against such teachers as Gladys Duguid, Frank Weathers, Maud Armstrong, Carol Dawson, Clyde Gump and several others who soon showed us we weren't quite as smart as we though we were. By the end of the year they had us pretty well tamed down and kept us shaped up during our sophomore, junior and at least part of our senior years.

Remember the fads?

Bell bottom trousers, the wider the better?

Derby hats that we bought for a quarter when the Kuhlman store went out of business?

Clod hoppers with heel plates? These made a nice ring walking down the marble halls but the teachers soon put a stop to that!

I don't remember any dress codes but I can't recall any of the girls wearing slacks. I may be wrong.

Most of the boys wore slacks and sweaters and quite a few wore neckties. I don't think I ever wore one except for the pictures.

Even though everyone was friendly, we all seemed to have special friends we palled around with. In our freshman

manual training class, J.D. Coyle, Joe Miller, Junior Fitzsimmons and I got to be good friends and it lasted the rest of our high school years. We even decided to go to California together after graduation but we never made it. In our classes together, we tried to be the last into the room. I think it was "Skeet" Weathers who said something like, "If the four horsemen can't get to class a little earlier they can sit out in the hall." We were a little more punctual after that, but the name stuck.

Do you remember the class picnics and wiener roasts? I don't remember all the details of things that might have happened and maybe it's just as well, but I do remember we always had a good time.

Do you remember . . .

- The political speeches in front of the assembly room for the class officers? They promised to change everything but like all politicians, none of the changes ever occurred.
- The Pedro games in the gym during noon hour?
- The noon league basketball games?
- The pep sessions before games?
- The times we would sneak a smoke out behind the gym or in the boiler room?

I will always remember the night several of the girls were going to teach J.D. and me to dance, before the senior prom. It turned into quite a party, but we still couldn't dance!

I remember the night Joe Miller and I (don't know where J.D. was that night) were sitting in Bishop's drinking a coke when someone suggested an adventure down to a speakeasy below the Allen county line to see if we could get beer. Joe had his dad's Model T truck so we all piled in, went down and talked our way in. We got a bottle of beer and were

sitting there sipping them when the Allen county sheriff and about a half dozen deputies raided the place. They let us go with a good lecture and we decided we better not say anything about it, but the next day it was all over school. We were called in to Earl Fribley's office, the principal, and he proceeded to tell us, among a lot of other things, that if we wanted to graduate we better not try that again. We kept out noses clean after that.

Then in my senior year I had several dates with a freshman girl.. For a long time I took a lot of razzing for being a cradle robber, a baby snatcher, Blondie and several others that were not too complimentary.

There was a bookkeeping contest in our senior year and I went to Muncie with a bunch of girls. I thought I was a pretty hot bookkeeper but they pinned my ears back down there! I think I ended up about 26th out of 32 contestants!

When I graduated I thought I had learned about everything there was to know, but when I got a job and started working I found there were a lot of things that we hadn't been taught in school.

I always felt that we had a group of very dedicated teachers during all our years at Auburn High School. When you read in the papers of high school students graduating and not being able to read or write, I feel very lucky to have studied under the Auburn teachers.

There are many other memories of our high school days, but I think I'll save those stories for another time!

Housekeeping . . .
For Men Living Alone

It seems that most men living alone feel that housekeeping is a tough, time consuming job. After living alone for nearly 10 years I have found that, with a little ingenuity, this job can be handled in a short time by most anybody.

I don't suppose there is one housewife in the city of Auburn that would agree with my suggestions, but these methods are strictly for the single men living alone who have so many things to do they can't spend too much time on household chores.

Washing dishes is a job that I don't think too many men would jump up in the middle of an interesting TV program to do. Housewives have a tendency to fill the sink half full of water and add a little detergent to clean up a few dishes. Now, I have devised a method to take all the work out of this job. First, start using paper plates. The grocery stores all carry a big line of large and small paper plates as well as paper bowls and sauce dishes in almost any design you might prefer. They make clean up a simple job. Just toss them in the garbage bag. That leaves only a cup and saucer and the silverware. These can be washed with just a cup of water, a good big shot of detergent and a scrubber sponge. The "Scrunge" is the best because it has a rough surface on one side to use on any food that might have dried a little and sticks a little tight. Did you know that a cup of water and a heavy shot of detergent will make suds nearly up to your elbows?

After a good scrubbing in this solution and a good rinse in hot water, the dishes come out squeaky clean. For the cooking utensils, just pour the rest of the wash mixture in the pan and use the rough side of the sponge to give it a good scrubbing. If you have several pans just pour from one to the other and then use what is left over to scrub out the sink. This method will cut the dish washing time from an average of at least thirty minutes down to about five minutes.

I wonder if I might be able to patent this system and maybe charge a license fee for its use? Of course, men living alone could use it free!

Washing is another job that men are not too interested in doing. In the old days Mondays were usually set aside to do the wash. Rubbing on a washboard, rinsing, cranking through a wringer and then pinning to a line stretched across the back yard made this an all day job. Then they still had to be taken in from the line, sprinkled and rolled up ready for ironing the next day.

All that has been eliminated with modern day washer and dryers and today's wash and wear clothes. Some housewives still sort out the light and colored clothes and wash them in different batches, but men do this a little differently. They wait until the dirty clothes pile up behind the bathroom door and when the door will open only far enough to get in by stepping in side ways, they grab the pile, stuff it in the washer, slop in some detergent, set the machine and go watch TV until the rinse cycle is over.

Why is it necessary to sort the colors? Most colored clothes are sold as color fast and even though a few white T shirts might get a little tint from some piece that had the label torn off, no one is really going to rate you on the Qaulity of

your washing skills.

Another good way to wash delicate items such as curtains is to wait until your favorite sister-in-law comes to visit and just casually ask her how to wash such things without screwing them up. Before you know it, she will have those curtains down, bundled up and headed for home and her washing machine.

The next day they come back, ready to hang and looking like they are brand new.!

If you use this method, you should never forget to think of something nice to do for her.

Cooking doesn't pose too many problems. All the stores carry a large assortment of frozen dinners and almost anything else that you could think of. Everyone of them have very clear instructions printed on the box on how to make them edible. All you need is a microwave oven and most anyone can come up with a fairly respectable meal with very little effort. I will have to admit they are not as tasty as the home cooked meals you were used to in the past, but they are filling.

I will have to warn you about trying to duplicate some of the old handed down recipes that tasted to good in the past. I have tried several and the results were only good enough to feed the garbage disposal.

One good way to get a good meal is to have something important to talk over with your son and time it so you arrive about meal time. It's a good bet your daughter-in-law will invite you to eat with them. Knowing that she is one of the better cooks around, you just can't refuse!

Just don't try this too often or she will think you planned it that way.

Of course, you will have to clean up the house every so

often. This takes some serious thought. You sit in your recliner and see that everything is just one big clutter, but you also see that it is a very organized clutter and changing anything would be a disaster. Next you see that most everything needs dusting so you take off your glasses and start in. Always take off your glasses, because this lets you do the dusting in about half the time it would if you kept them on. It really looked like a good job until the sun happens to shine across a table or chair and the streaks show up. You can't always pull the drapes!

Sweeping isn't so bad. Most men can push a vacuum sweeper over the carpet. You don't have to move the furniture to do a good job, either. Just sweep as close and as far under as you can and hope that some visitor doesn't drop something and have to move a chair to find it. Don't worry as this doesn't happen too often and you can always say something like, "Oops, I guess I missed a spot!" This will usually take care of the situation without losing face.

Another good idea is to have shag carpeting in variegated colors. It is surprising how this type of carpeting hides dirt. There is one drawback though. You have to vacuum quite often because a path gets packed down where you usually walk and that shows everyone whether you have vacuumed lately or not.

I don't suppose everyone will agree with these suggestions but they have worked for me. After all, they have been tested for about ten years!!!!

The Way it Was: Part One

Why is a trip to the dentist such a terrible think to think about even though you know it is absolutely necessary?

You have your first appointment hoping he won't find anything wrong, but know you will because you have been putting it off way too long.

After a series of X-rays and a lot of probing and checking you begin to worry a little. Then you hear several mmmmm's while he continues to probe and you know it's going to be quite serious. It turns out there is nothing that can be done except take them all out and put in the replacements. There is a lot to think about when you are faced with that decision. It isn't the pain that is sure to be present, but it's the worry of how the new teeth will fit, how they will look and if it will be possible to eat with them. You begin to wonder why you were such a fool when you were a kid, that didn't know better than to pry off pop bottle cap and crack hickory nuts with your teeth. But, back then you were a big man if you could do that.

Well, the decision was made and you set up an appointment to get the impressions made. This should be easy. Just bite down on a wad of glop and you were all done. Some things are not as easy as they seem! You sit there with your mouth bulging with a metal tray full of that glop and feel sure you are going to lose your lunch before it sets up. The bottom impression wasn't too bad because there were only two teeth to contend with, but then came the top! The metal tray with the gook covered the roof of your mouth and seemed to

extend half way down your throat. It takes a lot of will power to keep from spitting the whole thing out on the floor, but you figured you could tough it out till the glop set up. If you could do that, the rest should be easy. How wrong can you be? The glop set up too hard and the dentist pulled, pried, levered, twisted and perspired for about fifteen minutes before he got it loose. All that time you sat there with a death grip on the arms of his chair, wondering what you had done to deserve this, and thinking up all kinds of names to call him as soon as he got both hands out of your mouth so you could talk. Well, when it finally came out you were so relieved you forgot all those special names and just made the remark that he might be a painless dentist but you were definitely not a painless patient.

You get out of the office in a hurry after he tells you it would be several weeks before the dentures could be made. You nearly danced on the way to your car knowing that would be the last you would see of him for that long anyway.

Somehow you got through the waiting period, but as the hour for the appointment approached you felt like the lifer who had his last meal and was waiting to take the talk to the chair. You tried to drive as slow as possible, but those four or five blocks seemed to whiz by in a hurry.

You finally get to the office and barely get your hat and coat hung up when you are whisked off to the treatment room. The dentist and his nurse same in with big grins on their faces and that made your sure they just couldn't wait to start the torture you knew would be coming. Then you saw a tray full of syringes with needles about the size of spike nails and you knew, at once, you were in for a rough session. You had come that far so you couldn't chicken out now. I grabbed those chair arms, stiffened up and waited.

I didn't have long to wait before I saw one of those syringes headed toward my mouth. I twisted and squirmed but it didn't help a bit. It just kept coming and finally landed, and you know, it wasn't bad at all. It was just a light prick so I didn't worry about the next dozen or so. My jaw turned into a piece of dead wood and at the same time my lips vanished. Oh, they were still where they should be but the only way I could feel them was with my fingers. They wouldn't move by themselves. I realized that it's only natural for a dentist to start asking questions about this time, but thankfully, this one only asked questions that could be answered with a grunt.

Since he had my jaws and lips petrified it was time to proceed with the next phase of the inquisition. I took a quick glance and saw a hand with a pair of pliers that looked big enough to pull the tusks out of thousand pound walrus. How he ever got those things in my mouth, I'll never know. I tried to think of some of the pleasant things that happened in my lifetime and just as I was halfway through the time I caught that big fish, I heard him say it was all over. I just couldn't believe he had taken all those suckers out without me feeling a thing, but it was true.

He brought out the new plates and slipped them in place, and he and the nurse made comments on how nice they looked. They both seemed a little sad that there was no more punishment they could inflict on me. My jaws and lips were still numb and if I hadn't seen them slip the new dentures in, I wouldn't have know they were there.

That was the end of that session, so he pried my hands loose from the arms of his chair and told me to go home, but come back the next day.

I started for my car, trying to fill my pipe with stiff

hands. With the pipe filled, I got in my care and was ready to light up to calm my nerves. When I tried to light that pipe I found I didn't have the stupid thing in my mouth but half way between my chin and lower lip. I finally looked into the rear view mirror and guided it to my mouth where it belonged. I couldn't believe how that dirty, stinking old pipe could calm my nerves as fast as it did.

By the time I got home I felt pretty good and I began to think there wasn't as much to the whole deal as I thought there would be. Then the anesthetic started wearing off and I knew better. I found there were spots on those new plates that must have been red hot. I resisted the urge to see how far I could throw them and took a couple pain pills instead. They eased the sore spots enough to where I thought I might be able to live through this after all. Thank goodness I was able to get a good nights sleep but I woke up in the morning with those spots crying for more pain killers.

When I went in the next day the dentist was able to relive the sore spots, but new ones keep cropping up now and then.

Now, all I have to do is learn to live with those replacement parts. I have to learn how and what to eat and how to swallow after it is chewed. I have the urge to eat a steak or a pork chop, but settled for pudding, Jell-O and chicken broth. I found that I would have to learn all over again how to whistle and just where to hold my pipe.

I finally decided that false teeth have been around longer and are much more common than the organ transplants being done today, so why worry? Even if I never learn to use them, soup, pudding and mashed potatoes are very nutritious!

The Way it Was: Part Two

It took quite a long time to realize there was nothing to do but learn to live with those dentures. For the first few weeks they spent most of the time in a cup of water in the bathroom. I you looked real close, you could imagine they were grinning at you, as if to say "you are a chicken". Now, a challenge like that could not be ignored, so you set up a schedule to wear them for several hours each day and gradually increase the time until you were able to show those suckers they couldn't grin at you and get away with it.

That schedule was a beautiful piece of calculation but, like New Year's resolutions, it went down the drain the first day. They only thing you could do was to put them in a receptacle with a lid so you couldn't see that smirking grin every time you shaved or showered.

That worked fine for awhile, but you eventually got so tired of cream of wheat and peanut butter sandwiches dunked in coffee that you knew you would have to do something. After several false starts you finally put them in. It really wasn't too bad, because there weren't as many sore spots as at first. You even thought you might be able to handle some solid food.

The first attempt was a fiasco. They rattled around with each bite and made you afraid you might bite your lip or amputate part of your tongue. You knew that would never work, so you make a trip to the drug store to find out if they might have some sort of glue that would help the problem.

Yes. They had products such as Ora Fix, Fix-O-Dent, PoliGrip, Brace, Fast Teeth, Confident and a variety of

powders and cushions. You start reading the labels and find they are all supposed to be super hold, or heavy duty, new and improved or extra strength, so you shut your eyes and pick up one hoping it would work. You also saw a tube of salve that was supposed to relieve denture pains and irritations so you thought you ought to have some of that on hand. One thing that made you feel better was that with all the products on the shelves there must be a lot of people having the same problems you were having.

You eventually try several different brands until you decide on one that does a passable job. You never did find one that would let you eat an apple or a steak, but they did work pretty well on the softer solid foods.

You struggled with those stupid things for nearly five months and began to wonder if it wasn't about time for a reline. About then you got a call from the office girl to see how you were getting along. You asked her to check with the dentist to see whether it would be possible to reline them a month early. (He originally wanted to wait six months.)

He thought it would be OK so you were set up with an appointment for the next week.

The appointment day finally came and you went to the office like a little lamb thinking, "this couldn't be too bad, just fill the dentures with some sort of compound, bite down and it would all be over."

As usual . . . you dream turns out to be a nightmare. The filler material looked innocent enough when the dentist troweled it in the plates, and didn't feel too bad when he put both plates in your mouth with instructions to bite down and not move the dentures for at least a couple of minutes. At first there was just a nice warm glow, but it wasn't long until that

glow started getting hot! The dentist started spraying water in your mouth and kept telling you not to move, while the nurse was trying to suction the water out and at the same time, blow air in your mouth and reach for barf pans. She was certainly busy for awhile!

There was nothing you could do but sit there with your teeth clamped shut . . . without moving. You realized if you moved those plates it would just have to be done over, and there was no way you wanted that.

Since it is all over it seems kind of funny. There you sat with tears running down your face, the dentist spraying your mouth with what seemed like a garden hose and the nurse trying to suction if out and hold the barf pan under your chin all at the same time. It certainly wasn't humorous at the time.

You had just about decided the dentist wanted your mouth cooked well done instead of rare, when he said they were ready to take out. The bottom plate slipped out in pretty good shape but the top was a different story. It may not have taken quite as long to get it out as the original impression but it was every bit as miserable.

He told you he would have them ready to pick up the same evening, so off you go. You still sat in the chair awhile, not knowing whether you had enough strength left to make it to your car. You finally made it to the car and naturally the first thing you did was fire up the old pipe.

Five o'clock finally came and you returned to the office. The dentures were ready and you expected more problems, but as usual, you were wrong again. They slipped right in and fit like a kid glove. Well, maybe not quite that good, but after grinding out some hot spots you thought you should give them a trial run for a couple of days.

You were surprised at the improvement the re-line made. You find you do not need any of that messy adhesive to hold them in place and at last you can handle steaks and chops and almost anything else you enjoyed before this whole ordeal started.

One thing you have learned - like everything else in today's world, if the original part wears out there are always replacements. It's a little hard to learn to love something you hate with a passion, but . . . That's life.

Shingles

From a very early age I knew what shingles were. There were what people put on the roofs of their house to keep the rain from soaking the inside. Back in those days it was definitely a no-no for us kids to climb up on one of dad's outbuildings and walk around on the roof. He would explain very carefully, usually punctuated with a peach sprout, how we could fall off and break an arm or leg and that those shingles cost money. That if we kicked a hole in them it would mean a new roof. This was as far as our interest in the word "shingles" developed. We did hear our folks talk about someone having a "case of shingles" but we were too busy to listen to a discussion of something as common as a roof covering.

Now, seventy years later I came to the conclusion that I should have paid more attention to their conversations.

One morning I awoke and saw a couple of red spots on my side. I passed them off as insect bites. I had been tramping around in the woods and assumed they were early mosquito bites or some other early spring insects that are common. As usual, I was wrong, as more of them developed the next day and they commenced to sting and burn. I remembered my brother had what he called shingles a couple of years ago, so I got out the medical books, and sure enough, I had all the symptoms described there. Then I had one of my better ideas. I would go see the doctor.

He grinned and assured me they were shingles and they usually went away in three or four weeks. Then he gave me a prescription that he said helped some people, but not others.

He also gave me a prescription for some very strong pain killers. I told him there was no need for them as I didn't think the pain would bother me too much, but he insisted. He was right, and once again I was wrong. Other than that he said there was nothing to do but let them run their course.

I picked up the prescriptions but determined not to use the pain pills. I stuck it out for a couple of days, but even stupid people like me have to change their minds occasionally.

Going fishing seemed to ease the pain a little but I just couldn't fish twenty-four hours a day. So when the pain got so bad I couldn't get out of my easy chair without feeling like I was being torn apart, I dug out the bottle of pain pills. I began to hope the doctor was wrong and that these shingles wouldn't last three or four weeks, but I guess I will have to wait to find out.

In the meantime, did you ever have an industrial size sunburn with someone sticking pins in your side every twenty seconds or so, and a mean looking cowboy with a hot branding iron practicing his art on your side every minute? If not . . . you have never had shingles.

Another disadvantage is when you meet someone who asks how you are and you reply, "Fine, but I have a case of shingles". They usually say something like, "Oh, but isn't it a nice day?" That kind of conversation just doesn't east the pain one bit. Then there are the people who say, "My Aunt Nellie had those and she was down in bed for a full month". Or "Uncle Harry got over all the misery in just a week." That is a little confusing, but you start thinking how you would respond to anyone who tells you they have shingles. You would tell them, truthfully, just how they act. Oh, maybe you would exaggerate just a little to make a better story, but you

would be sympathetic and polite enough to wait until they had gone to start laughing.

I guess, when you get older, there are a lot of aches and pains that you thought would never happen to you, but that is what makes old age interesting. It's always something different. There are so many things you want to do that you just can't let all those aches and pains get you down. We will just have to live by the old adage that our folks taught us back when we were kids . . . "Grin and bear it!?"

Smokey Joe and the Bag Lady

Smokey Joe was dozing in his easy chair when the Bag Lady came rushing in with the exciting news that she had found an item that was too big for her shopping cart and wanted to know if he would help her get it before someone else took it.

It was Spring clean-up in Auburn and almost everyone had cleaned out their garages, attics and basements and piled all their unwanted items out near the curb for the city to pickup.

Smokey had seen some of those piles with items that could be repaired and used, or torn apart and rebuilt into all kinds of other useful products. Now, Smokey was a confirmed "pack rat" and was just too self conscious to be seen poking around in trash piles, but with the Bag Lady along it would look like he was helping her. He would have a good excuse if he was seen by his friends.

When she described the item she wanted, he knew it would be too big to fit in either of their vehicles and the only answer would be a pickup truck. Fortunately, the Bag Lady was very well acquainted with a hard working young man who owned a pickup, and she was sure she could trade her shopping cart for the pickup for a short length of time.

This worked out quite well as the item she wanted was an outdoor picnic table. It was a little unsteady on its legs. A couple of the boards on top had seen their best days and would need to be replaced, but it did have possibilities.

Now what good is a picnic table without benches? It just happened that Smokey had seen a pile that had a couple of

benches. A short drive and they had seats for their table. They would take some work and they would never be as good as new, but they also had possibilities. If they couldn't be repaired they could always be used for fire wood. Either way they had some use.

Both Smokey and the Bag Lady for a little excited about their first acquisition but things seemed to get out of hand. They stopped at nearly every pile in the neighborhood looking for lumber to repair the table and benches. They ran across a pile that had two nice looking benches underneath several sacks of trash and grass clippings. Now, they decided you can never get too many benches but they thought they had better ask the lady who was working in her yard, before they started tearing the pile down to get to the benches. All this paid off as the benches were in good shape and would only need a coat of pain to make them serviceable. The Bag Lady was sure she could talk the hard working young me (who owned the pickup truck), to do the job for free.

By this time, the pickup was getting a little piled up, but there were so many piles they hadn't looked at, that it would be foolish, considering all the treasures they had already found, not to check them out.

Sure enough. The very next pile produced another rare find. A brass stand lamp. With a little (?) polishing and maybe new wiring, a new bulb socket and switch, a lightbulb and shade, it would be just what was needed. But if not, it could always be put in a garage sale and they would be able to recover at least half the cost of the items needed to make it serviceable.

The next pile was a little disappointing to both of them. There was a very nice picnic table under several bags of trash

that looked in much better shape than the one they had in the truck. They studied quite a while whether they should unload the truck and trade the one they had for the one in the pile, but decided there was too much work involved so they had to pass it up.

A rare find in one pile was a captain's chair. The only thing wrong was the seat was split down the middle. This would require a simple glue job to fix, but cleaning the old varnish off and refinishing might take some time. They still had the hard working young man to fall back on. This was like finding a gold nugget in an ash heap, and both Smokey and the Bag Lady were proud of themselves for being the ones to discover such a treasure.

There were a number of other piles yet to check so they had to move on. One pile produced a nice lady's vinyl shoulder bag that would make a real nice fishing tackle bag. Another had a child's suitcase that would make a good container for a tool kit. Others produced a small table that will make a nice end table after the hard working young man repairs the legs. Then there was a large bundle of fencing that will be used for a climbing plant and a lot of various pieces of lumber and plywood that will be useful for something.

There were so many good items they had to pass up because the truck was getting overloaded. They decided it had been a profitable day.

There is an old saying that "one person's trash is another person's treasure," and this was certainly true for Smokey Joe and the Bag Lady.

Class of '31 Reunion: 1989

When Helen asked me if I could recall anything about our school days that might be interesting, I told her I didn't think I could. But Helen has a way of twisting a person's arm that makes him agree to most anything.

Then I was stumped. I had no idea what might interest anyone, so I dug out my old copies of The Follies and started leafing through them. In the back where the merchants had their ads were several I found that showed the changes that have occurred since our high school days.

For example:

In 1928 you could buy an Auburn Speedster for $1095.

In 1929 the Cabriolet was listed at $1195.

In 1930 they had the straight eight for $3095.

I think we all know what they sold for at the recent ACD auction.

Clouse Motors was selling Hudson's and Essex.

Eckhart Sales was selling Oakland Eights.

We got out ice from the DeKalb Ice Company and the Auburn Roller Mills made our flour.

There were three coal companies. I don't think you can buy coal in Auburn anymore.

We had two bottling works, Berg's and Nehi, and you could buy a bottle of either one for a nickel.

MayTag aluminum washers were either electric or gasoline powered.

There were two confectionaries: Bishop's and Muzzillo's.

Culbertson Hardware had Hamilton Beach sweepers for

$39.95 advertised "built to last a lifetime", but below it said there was a two year warranty!

There were seven small groceries, all locally owned. George Muhn advertised "groceries, meats, dry goods and a coffee shop in the rear."

Six clothing stores all locally owned.

All the telephone numbers were three digits or less.

Florence Webb played the organ at the Court Theater and it only cost ten cents to sit in the balcony.

Auburn Hotel had meals at 35 cents up.

Glass Barber Shop had haircuts at 25 cents and shaves at 15 cents.

It cost a nickel to ride from the Junction to Auburn on the inter-urban.

There were other things that were different back in our school days:

We could go to the five and ten cent store and actually buy items for a dime.

We didn't have Social Security to worry about.

Gasoline was 10 cents a gallon.

We never saw boys wearing earrings.

We were taught to type on mechanical typewriters, rather than word processors or computers.

A chip was a piece of wood and not a part for your computer.

Our dishwasher was a pan in the sink and our clothes dryer was a wire stretched across the back yard.

There were no heart transplants or artificial hearts.

We thought people had to be married before they lived together.

You could mail a letter for three cents and a post card for a penny.

The County Farm was our idea of a nursing home.

There was no instant coffee or TV dinners, and frozen food was something you left on the porch overnight in the winter.

There were no microwaves or television and the ball point pen hadn't been invented.

A ride around the court square and a coke at Bishop's was a big evening.

And "Made in Japan" meant junk.

We thought we had the best of everything, but there have been so many changes in the last sixty years that you can't help but wonder what the next sixty will be like.

I think you all remember how anxious we were to get our copies of The Follies so we could pass them around and get everyone to sign them.

Looking at my '28 copy, all the signatures were by boys and right under the names was "A.HS" '31, but there is a question mark after the '31. Makes you wonder whether there was some doubt we would last another three years.

Then in '29 the only signatures with the question marks were John Williams and Roy Trovinger.

More girls signed that year. One read, "Remember the girl who copied in Physical Geography class," signed by Blanche Welsh. Another, "Remember the sophomore picnic - Oh Boy", signed by Helen Mayfield.. Then, "Remember the wiener roast and our ride home", signed Vivian Elson.

It seems we were a little better acquainted after two years.

In 1930 John Williams still put a question after the '31.

There were quite a few freshman, sophomores and even seniors signing that year. It seems the class of '31 was getting noticed a little more.

In 1931 we all wished each other success and good luck, and some of the notes seemed a little sad that our high school days were over. Blanche wished good luck in dancing and even Helen wished me good luck, but added she was a little jealous because I went to the bookkeeping contest and she didn't get to go.

And John Williams quit putting a question mark after the '31.

Those notes and signatures bring back a lot of pleasant memories, and I can imagine my granddaughter's reading them over some day and wondering whether their granddad ever did any studying in high school or was just there for a good time.

The Big 50th

Prologue: In June of 1991 my daughter-in-law decided to give her husband a surprise party for his fiftieth birthday. She rented a hall at the Fair Grounds and invited around fifty of his friends and school mates. She also asked one of their friends, who was an amateur stand up comic, to act as emcee. I talked to him and he said his program would be a kind of "roast".

This was too much for me, I just couldn't resist. I asked him to call on me first and the following is the result.

GENE

It was a hot night on July first, 1941, when Gene got his first glimpse of this world. After one quick look he didn't like what he saw and started bawling his head off.

He really wasn't too much to look at. Red, wrinkled and we thought at first - bald, but after we looked real close he did have some very fine white hair.

He looked so fragile that Mom and Dad were scared to pick him up, but those good lungs let us know we had to do something. The first child always gets a lot of attention, and Gene soon learned that all he had to do was start bawling and someone would come running.

He didn't start walking for about a year. He figured as long as Mom and Dad gave him everything he wanted there was no use going after it himself. His mother finally put her foot down and he had no trouble learning to walk. After he learned to walk he was into everything. He spent quite a lot of

time sitting on his little chair in the corner . . . with his face to the wall.

A couple years later his brother came along. He didn't like it at first, because he didn't get all the attention he had learned to expect. He soon got over that feeling and everything went fine.

As the boys were growing up they were like any other two boys, the oldest picking on the youngest and the youngest trying to get even. Gene's favorite trick was whispering to his brother something like "you have got a bug in your ear" just to make him cry. When his mother asked what was wrong, Gene, was always the innocent bystander and never knew what happened.

His mother had a yardstick that she used quite often. It never hurt, but Gene soon learned to imitate a person in mortal agony when he was spanked. It did seem to help a little because he would turn into a perfect little gentleman whenever his mother threatened to get the yardstick.

Gene started mowing lawns as soon as he was able to push a lawn mower. He was proud to be earning some money and he even saved part of what he earned. When his brother was old enough to mow, they both had lawns to take care of each week. At one time his Dad was doing repair work on five mowers to keep them going. They were a little hard on the equipment. When it was suggested they mow the yard at home, they always had something else that just had to be done at that time.

When Gene turned 16 he thought he was in seventh heaven, because he could get a driving license. We had an old Army surplus Jeep at that time and since he had been driving the family car, when we were along, we allowed him to drive

the Jeep with instructions not to get in any trouble.

He was very careful for awhile, but then one day he wanted to show some of his buddies how he could drive across Cedar Creek and up the other bank. The creek was a little deeper than he thought and he flooded the engine out right in the middle. Nothing to do but walk home. He told his mother what had happened, and she told him he would have to tell his dad when he came home. That was a little hard for him to do, because he was sure I would take his driver's license and not let him drive for awhile.

After I heard his story we went to take a look at the Jeep. Sure enough, there it sat in the middle of the creek.

He was worried and didn't think it was too funny, but I could hardly keep from laughing. (It reminded me of some of the things I had done when I was his age.)

I thought I should teach him some kind of lesson, so I told him he would have to go up and have Norm Rohm bring out his tow truck and tow the Jeep home. He would have to pay Norm from the money he had saved up mowing lawns. I thought the wrecker would cost at least thirty or thirty-five dollars, but Norm crossed me up and only charged Gene three dollars.

On October the fifteenth, 1965 Gene did the smartest thing of his life. He married Shirley Alwood. Watching his two daughters grow up was a high point in life for his mother and me.

Joking aside, I am proud of the boys, their wives and our grandchildren, but it does make a person feel like they are over the hill when a son is celebrating his fiftieth birthday.

Hang in there, Gene!

The Art of Farming

My wife's aunt and uncle lived on a farm down near Churubusco when we were first married. We enjoyed going down to visit them as often as we could. We enjoyed their company and liked to roam around the farm.

They had a big woods, and since my wife and I both liked to hunt squirrels, that might have been one of the reasons we went there so often.

Later they moved to a farm north and west of Auburn and this farm also had a good squirrel woods. I suppose they got a little tired of us running out there every chance we got but they insisted we come out any time.

They were a couple of the finest people we ever knew. Usually when we came in from hunting they would have supper ready and would not let us leave until we had eaten. My wife felt that we were imposed on them, but they wouldn't listen to that kind of excuse.

Years later the Aunt moved to Auburn and started working at the old rubber company. We still liked to visit her as often as we could. We both felt she was like a second mother to us, and we always had a hard time getting away without eating a meal.

But I am getting away from my story. They had three children and one of them was a boy.

The farmed with horses in those days and that boy could handle those horses and that farming equipment nearly as well as his dad, even at that early age.

My wife and I thought he might be a little reckless and wondered whether he would live long enough to grow up, but

he did and is now one of the most successful farmers in DeKalb County and, I must add, one of the best teachers in the whole state.

I decided if I ever wanted to start farming, who better to teach me than the kid we worried about when he was a boy.

I talked to him and he said he would teach me the ropes.

The Art of Farming - Corn picking

It just happened to be time to harvest corn when I was ready for my first lesson, so my teacher turned me over to his son who is every bit as good a farmer as his dad.

The corn picker cab was full of levers and switches, and I thought I didn't have the faintest idea about what they did even though my teacher tried to explain how everything worked. Frankly, I wasn't paying too much attention. I was just enjoying the ride and watching the rabbits scatter to the uncut rows of corn. Besides, there was always the chance to chase out a deer.

About the only thing that cab lacked was a TV set. Maybe that wouldn't be such a good idea. Probably make it a little hard to steer the picker down the corn rows.

Finally, my teacher was able to get it through my head how to operate two of the levers. One operated the unloading spout and the other turned on the unloading auger. After a couple of tries I was able to do a fairly respectable job without spilling too much corn on the ground.

I decided I had learned enough for one day so I left the picker and thought I should see what happened to the corn

when it was taken to the elevator. I rode with my older teacher and a dump truck load of shelled corn.

I wouldn't say the ride over was too rough, but when we got there I did check to see if my fingers had left any dents in the door handle.

The first thing to do is get the load weighed and the moisture content checked. The load was then taken to the unloading pit. The young fellow working there was a kind of practical joker. The first thing he did was to walk up to my teacher and dump a hand full of corn down the open front of his shirt. Of course, my teacher had to retaliate, so he moved the truck up a ways and dumped about half that load a couple feet in front of the pit. The kid had to shovel that corn into the pit by hand.

The ride back wasn't too bad, but I did check the door handle one more for finger dents.

Now, if I could just figure out how to operate all those levers and switches in the picker, I should have this job down pat. I am sure it will never happen.

They say "you can't teach an old dog new tricks" and this surely holds true as far as I am concerned!

The Art of Farming - Filling Silos

I took lessons from my older teacher on how corn is cut to fill silos. First you must prepare the equipment. This consists of moving several pieces of machinery to get to the cutter which is usually back in the furthest corner where it was stored after the silos were filled the previous year. It seems

wise to store this cutter in the far corner so it doesn't have to be moved when you want to get out the bean combine, the corn picker or several other pieces of equipment that will be used before you have to use the cutter again. That way you don't even have to look at that sucker for a whole year.

After you get it hooked up and hauled out of the shed you try all the controls to see if you had forgotten to repair anything that you noticed when you put it away the year before and didn't do at that time.

Of course, all the gears and chains needed oiling and greasing. The easiest way to do this is to take a one liter coke bottle, fill it with oil, screw on the cap, bore a little hole in the cap and then after you clean up the oil you spilt on the floor when you filled the bottle, you are ready to start lubricating. Next you turn on all the controls and douse anything that moves. That system works pretty good and it's fast.

Then you are ready to go out to the field. You hook on the receiver wagon and pull into the first rows of corn. You are sure nothing can go wrong. After all, you went over that cutter and adjusted everything and gave it a good oiling, so what else could possibly turn up?

You start down those first rows, maybe even whistling a little bit, but you haven't gone thirty feet when you sink that tractor up to the axles in the only mud hole in the entire field. When this happens you have to learn a whole new vocabulary. My teacher used words that I had never heard before. In fact, it sounded like a language from outer space.

It even caused a blue haze to settle around that tractor cab.

Nothing to do but get out another tractor and some log chains, unhook the receiver wagon and pull that sucker out of

the mud. Of course, my teacher was talking to it in that strange language most of the time.

After everything was pulled out and hooked up you could get along pretty well for the rest of the day.

Just one other thing might occur if you forgot to check out the receiver wagon before you start. When you start to unload and blow the corn to the top of an eighty foot silo, you find that the unloading equipment on the wagon wouldn't work, so you call your teacher for help.

You could see by the expression on his face that he resented having to stop cutting just to repair a piece of machinery that was a little bit stubborn about doing its job. He has a knack of making things work by just talking to them in that strange language, and if that doesn't work, a sledge hammer and a crow bar will always do the job.

After this lesson I think when I start farming I will hire my silos filled. I am just too old to learn that new language!

The Art of Farming - Dairy Cows

I had always thought that when I started farming I would like to have some cows. I asked my teacher if he knew of someone who could teach me how to handle a herd of dairy cows. He immediately turned me over to his wife who knows more about handling a dairy herd than anyone in northern Indiana.

After she taught me the rudiments of this job I could see it just wasn't for me.

I must say that she was the most efficient person I have ever watched do a job. There was never a wasted motion in all

the operations she had to perform. She even had the cows trained. When she finished with one cow, she just opened a gate and it immediately walked out and another cow, who had been waiting at the door, walked in and took its place. It seemed to me that some of them even smiled and seemed happy that it was their turn to be milked.

That was a very interesting lesson, but now I am sure that I will not have any dairy cows on my farm. I don't believe I could make a cow smile at me when it came in to be milked.

I might have a couple of steer for meat or maybe a couple of goats to keep the weeds down, but dairy cows? No way!!!

It's much easier to buy milk at the grocery store!!

The Art of Farming - Blackberry picking

I wanted to make a batch of blackberry jam and asked my teacher if he might know where I could find some wild blackberries on his farm. He told me he knew where there were scads of them and they were all as big as his thumb. He was baling hay at the time and said he couldn't show me, but he did tell me where to go.

I took off following his directions very carefully and thinking I could fill my buckets in a very short time.

I did find the berry bushes, but no berries. Oh, I did find about a tea cup full after about an hour of searching.

I went back and told him what I had found and kidded him a little about sending me on a wild goose chase.

The following Sunday he called me and said to come out and he would "damn well" guarantee that we would find

berries. I couldn't resist a guarantee like that so I went out.

He had his four-wheel quad cycle all gassed up and ready to go, so I crawled on the luggage rack in back of him and we took off. I would guess that we rode that sucker at least ten miles, through briar patches, over bumps, down corn rows, through the woods, over logs and through weed patches higher than our heads.

His guarantee was good. We did fill our buckets with nice big berries, but sitting on that luggage rack made out of iron pipes was not the most pleasant ride I ever had. The next time I will take a big pillow to pad that rear seat.

My posterior just doesn't provide enough padding.

With all the pictures I have taken and all the excellent teaching I have had, I am sure I will have a good harvest next year from my three tomato plants and my seven hills of beans!!

The Class of '31 Reunion - 1990

I think you will all remember how proud we were, fifty nine years ago, to be called seniors. After all, we had just finished twelve years of school, one way or another, and that was quite an accomplishment. We were full of energy and spirit and ready to take on the world with all the enthusiasm of eighteen year old kids who thought they knew everything.

Now, fifty-nine years later we are again called seniors. After living in this world a little over three quarters of a century, I think we have really earned that title. We have all see so many changes, had so many ups and does and put up with many new ideas, some good and some not so good. We have been through good times and bad times, we have raised our families, have made many new friends and, I hope not too many enemies. Probably most of us have swallowed half our weight in prescription pills.

We have learned a whole new vocabulary. Such words as dentures, hearing aids, Geritol, Preparation H and oat bran were never mentioned in our English classes and if they were, were soon forgotten.

Some people would say these are the Golden Years. But with the government bailing out the S&L's, buying telescopes that won't work, sending money to any country that asks for it, letting the National Debt get out of hand and then raising taxes to pay for all this . . . we would have to think that phrase was started by out congressmen.

We studied history in school, but I think we have lived more history than we ever learned from the books.

I have a sister-in-law who keeps sending me clippings

on getting older and one she sent a couple years ago seems to fit out generation quite well.

I would like to read it to you.

The title is "A Tale of Two Old Timers", written by Paul Peterson.

"As a senior citizen, I'm just a carbon copy of my old car that has more than 100,000 miles of bumps, starts and stops, trying to keep up with city traffic, and occasionally stalling when the going gets rough. Yes, I have to go in for repairs more often now and have regular tune-up jobs to keep me running. Fortunately, the good Lord has not issued a recall on my particular model and I am thankful for that.

I can't scratch off like the teenagers in their souped up sports cars. My brakes seem to be dragging and my clutch slipping, but I do get around and arrive at my destination in one piece.

My frame is bent a little, my bumpers are bulging in the wrong places and I lack that new shiny, wrinkle-free look of some of the latest models. But as they say .. . beauty is only skin deep.

My warranty has long since expired, and the Blue Book lists me as practically worthless as a trade in. But it's what's under the hood that counts, and my wife wouldn't trade me for anything or anyone. With the love of my family and friends, I feel that I'm a Rolls Royce.

Senior citizens have much the same problems as old cars with regard to leaky radiators and hoses, and unpredictable water pumps. Many of my friends complain of having to make one or two pit stops during the night . . . and so do I. But the walk is good exercise and it keeps creaking joints alive.

If my engine doesn't run smoothly because my timers is off kilter I can always get a doctor to install a cruising gadget, called a pacemaker, and make me good for another 50,000 miles.

My tailpipe and muffler show some wear and tear so I have to lubricate them with a grease preparation, but unlike some of the later models, I still perform well on regular gas.

Doc Mecanik says my drive shaft and transmission are also worn and that my battery needs charging. Father time, Mother Nature and automobile manufacturers evidently share the same view with regard to planned obsolescence and over-production.

I flunked the inspection test last week because my headlights were too dim. My eye doctor corrected the problem with a new set of bifocal lenses. Lately, I haven't been gallivanting around much at night anyway. My engine loses some of it's zip after 9:30 p.m. and my spark plugs yawn at 10:00.

I have been bragging to my friends that I have the quietest old time car on the road. And now the bad news. My ear doctor says I have a hearing impairment and that's the reason the car sounds so quiet. I have an appointment with him next week, if I can remember it.

A word of warning to the youth of our land: Fast living and reckless driving will make a new car and a young body die before their time. Avoid the junkyard and the graveyard by sticking to the rules of clean living and careful driving.

The Pros and Cons of Pipe Smoking

In every paper and on most TV shows you see or hear that smoking is one of the leading causes of all kids of serious illnesses. I have smoked a pipe for the last forty-five years and have never thought it caused any of the dire results that the news items were describing. Now it seems that I have been wrong. There have been so many of those items by noted authorities that you can't help thinking about them just a little.

Then an item appeared in the local paper announcing a seminar to be held at the hospital for a sure-fire way to stop smoking. That started me thinking maybe I should look into that. The more I thought, the better the idea sounded. After all, most non-smokers would consider me a confirmed addict who doesn't have the will power to quit. I would show them!

I decided to think about it for awhile before I made up my mind. That was a mistake because I started remembering about a similar series of classes I attended at Oakland University in Union Lake, Michigan about twenty years ago. This seminar was headed by a hypnotist who practically guaranteed results. I guess I didn't hypnotize too well as they never did me a bit of good. In fact, I could hardly wait to get out of class so I could light up.

Being a first class procrastinator, I decided to wait some more before making a decision.

The next time I started thinking about quitting I decided to list the pros and cons of smoking. Maybe that would help me decide what to do.

I thought I should list the cons first and, of course, the first and most important would be the effect on my health.

Thinking about that, I could not recall any serious effects that I could say were directly caused by pipe smoking. I always blamed age rather than smoking for making a flight of stairs seem so much higher than they were twenty years ago. I realize that something may show up any time but why worry now?

The second con I thought of was the effect on clothes, furniture and rugs. I guess you don't own one pair of pants that doesn't have a hole burnt in them somewhere. The same for shirts and furniture. Shag rugs don't show up so badly, but those little spots are there. Even the seat of my car shows those little black burn holes.

Then the uproar about second hand smoke makes a trip outdoors mandatory when visiting non-smoking friends. A terrible nuisance!

The effect on my memory must be mentioned. As you get older, some things stay sharp in your memory. For example, if you need to go somewhere in a hurry you might forget your dentures or your hearing aid, but you never forget your tobacco pouch or pipe. Makes you wonder which is more important.

The cost is another big item. When I first started smoking a pipe you could buy a can of tobacco for about three bucks, but now it is ten to twelve. You could buy a good pipe for about two dollars. The same pipe would cost fifteen to twenty and all the gadgets needed by pipe smokers have gone up about the same amount. I would guess if I had saved all the money I have spent on pipe smoking, I could have bought a really nice thirty foot motor home and still had enough left over for a two month fishing trip in Alaska. That is something to think about.

Then there is pride. I have always thought I could do most anything that I set my mind to. (In a mediocre way, of course). That just doesn't work when I try to quit smoking. I have resolved to quit many times but those resolutions seem to fade away when my mind starts saying "Aw, go ahead and light up." That hurts my pride but the urge is too strong to ignore.

I could think of a lot more cons but I began wondering if there were any pros. It took a lot of thinking to come up with anything that non-smokers would not call just plain stupid.

For example, smoking a pipe calms your nerves. When you need to think out a knotty problem, it seems that the act of filling your pipe and lighting up seems to help solve that problem. Maybe that sounds a little foolish, but it seems to be a good reason to a pipe smoker.

Smoking can be used as a crutch for memory loss as you get older. When you think of something that has to be done, just write a note and lay it on your tobacco pouch. You know you will be picking that pouch up every hour or so, and you can't forget that note if you see it that often. That really works!

I took an inventory of all the equipment I have on hand. I found about twenty pipes. Some had seen better days, some were too heavy to use with dentures and several had never been smoked. Then there were a half dozen reamers and tampers, six boxes of filters, a couple packages of pipe cleaners and about thirty lighters. I even found one set of two pipes that were a present when I retired in 1978 and they had never been smoked. Besides all of that, I found two cans of tobacco and several smaller packages.

It seems a shame to throw all that equipment away in the trash. Besides, a lot of those pipes were old friends and you just don't discard old friends for any reason!

There is one last pro that I could think of. Smoking a pipe constantly tends to dull your taste buds. This allows you to eat things that are good for you (but never liked) instead of the things you liked, but were never good for you. This seemed like on more good reason to smoke.

After listing all the pros and cons, and there are many more I am sure, I will have to agree that the cons far outweighed the pros.

But . . . there is still that little voice that keeps saying, "Aw, go ahead and light up!"

The Old Butter Churn

Our family lived on a ten acre farm
When I was just a lad.
Cash was scarce and times were hard,
But we lived with what we had.

I remember the chores we had to do
And the things we had to learn,
But the thing that really comes to mind
Is Mom's old butter churn.

Two times each day we would see our Mom
With her milk pail on her arm
And a three legged stool in her other hand
As she headed for the barn.

One cow kicked and spilled the milk.
That didn't suit Dad at all,
So he tied her leg with a piece of rope
To a ring in the floor of the stall.

With milking done the milk was strained
Through a piece of muslin cloth
And poured into crocks on the cellar ledge
Where mom skimmed off the froth.

After a day the cream was skimmed
From the top of the milk with care
And put in a jar with a good tight lid
To keep out all the air.

When the jar was full it was time for Mom
To scald all the parts of that churn,
The cream was poured in, the stomper put on
And we knew we would all take a turn.

We sat on a chair and stomped up and down
To make the butter form.
It was a tiresome job but we all knew
Fresh bread would be waiting, still warm.

Mom baked that day and I'm sure she knew
That her kids would surely learn
There is nothing so sweet as fresh baked bread
And butter from Mom's old churn.

A Piece of Cake

When a person passes the four score age and has always had good health, they tend to feel that nothing will ever go wrong.

Believe me, it does!

About a year and a half ago I thought I should have my eyes checked. I had been putting it off and noticed things just didn't seem quite as bright as they should. My optometrist gave me a good check and thought he detected some cataract trouble might be starting. He didn't think it was too serious and suggested he could correct the problem with stronger lens. The new lens did correct the problem I was having.

My next check up about six months later showed the cataracts had grown some and he again suggested a stronger lens. These lens worked fine for about four months when the left eye started getting quite hazy. He said the cataract had enlarged but we should try one more lens in just the left eye before he would recommend surgery.

That new lens did help, but a couple months later I was driving some brads in a trinket I was making and I couldn't hit those suckers on the head! That made me a little disgusted so I tossed that hammer aside, went in to the phone and called for a quick appointment. I was lucky, he could see me that afternoon. It didn't take too long for him to find that the left eye was ripe and ready for surgery and it was no use trying a stronger lens. He had his receptionist call an eye surgeon and make an appointment for the following Monday. This surgeon was recommended by my cousin, who had both eyes done, and he was well satisfied with the results.

The first visit to his office was about a two hour affair. It consisted of a medical review of myself, as well as my family and parents. Then there were all kinds of vision tests and several computer checks that I didn't have the faintest idea what they were for, but the technician seemed to know what they were all about. I had to go along with whatever she found out. After all these checks it boiled down to one thing. The only help possible would be surgery. So a date was set up for three weeks later.

Thinking about surgery for three weeks just isn't my idea of a very pleasant way to spend your spare time. First I read the medical books on cataract surgery and they all said it was no big deal and usually very successful. This didn't quite satisfy me so I talked to all the people I could think of who had gone through this operation. My sister had both eyes operated on and seemed to get along real well. Oh, she had a little discomfort for a while, but she was well pleased with the results after that. It seemed that everyone I talked to was pleased with the results and they all said it was "a piece of cake".

This might have eased the worry a little, but the idea of having someone cut into your eyes is not a very pleasant thought. The surgeon had shown me a set of pictures showing the actual steps of just how the surgery would be performed and assured me the complications would be a very small factor.

I was also given a couple of lists of do's and don'ts for the day before and the day after surgery. They were simple enough that even I could follow them without cheating a little.

Surgery day finally came. Thank goodness, I am blessed with a daughter-in-law who was willing to drive me to Ft.

Wayne for all these appointments.

At the surgery the first thing they needed were records of insurance and medicare and wanted to know if I was taking any medication prescribed by my physician. There were other questions but I just don't remember what they were. Then after I signed about six other papers, which I didn't take time to read, they hustled me off to prep me for surgery.

To me, this was the worse phase of the whole deal. I was taken to a curtained cubicle and told to undress all but my under shorts and socks, put on one of those stupid gowns that tied in the back. Climb up on a Gurney and cover up. Oh, I also had to put on one of those funny looking shower caps like they wear in surgery. This wasn't too bad except it took me about five minutes to get that miserable gown tied in the back.

As soon as I got all tucked in, the nurse came in and put a blood pressure cuff on my arm, stuck little do-dads over my chest and hooked me up to some sort of gadget that, I guess, told them whether my heart was still beating. I wasn't too sure of that myself. Then she clipped another do-dad on my finger and I didn't have the faintest idea what that was for. I guess it was to check something, or maybe they didn't want me pointing my finger at anyone.

I thought that might be the end but there was more to come. She put a bracelet on my wrist, possibly to make sure who I was in case they forgot who had caused them all this fuss. I was certain this had to be the end, but I was wrong again. Next was a needle stuck in my arm and left sticking there. I still have no idea what this is for but it must have had a purpose other than just cruel and unusual punishment.

After all this I had another phase to go through. The nurse came in with about five bottles of drops and proceeded

to put a drop from each bottle in my eye and told me she would be back to repeat the procedure two more times at ten minute intervals. After the drops, she put an oxygen tube in my nose and said I was ready for surgery. She wheeled me into the operating room.

I guess those drops were necessary because I never felt a thing during the actual surgery. I was awake all that time and could sense what the surgeon was doing from the pictures he had shown me. Those drops had eliminated every bit of feeling in my eye, in half my forehead and the side of my head back as far as my ear. I don't know just how long the surgeon worked on me, but I would guess it was less then ten minutes.

After a bandage with a metal shield was put on the eye, I was wheeled back to a curtained room and all those gadgets were removed. I was told to get dressed and go home, but to come back to the office the next day and have the bandages removed and the eye checked.

Just about forgot. The nurse did give me a cup of coffee. I think that was the best tasting coffee I ever had!!

A Piece of Cake - Part Two

After eye surgery in 1994, I was told to get a complete examination in about a year. Being a first class procrastinator, I decided that since everything seemed normal and any minor sight problems, I just passed off as the misconceptions of an old man. So why worry?

Then it happened and it happened in exactly the same way that resulted in the first surgery. I was driving a small nail and I couldn't drive it straight. It's a little weird how a stupid small nail can make a confirmed old procrastinator do something that had been put off too long, namely make an appointment with my optometrist . . . hoping that maybe a new lens might take care of the problem or at least help me to drive a nail without bending the stupid thing.

After a thorough examination it was decided that new a new lens was not the answer. It seemed the membrane on the back of my eyeball was cloudy because of fluid between it and the implant. The only way to clear it up was laser surgery. I was told that this condition often happened after cataract surgery and the laser surgery was a fairly simple procedure. Well, since I had come this far I might as well go the whole way, so I had the office call and make an appointment with the surgeon who had performed the original cataract surgery.

I contacted my driver and she graciously consented to derive me to Ft. Wayne on the appointment date.

I really didn't worry too much about this procedure because I had a lot of faith in the surgeon. After all, he had improved my vision with a more serious operation than this was supposed to be.

Appointment day finally came, a nice warm, sunny day for a drive. At the office there were a number of forms to fill out and sign that asked about everything except for the weather and how the fish were biting.

Then I was taken to the examination room for another thorough going over. Next I was told to go over to the Lutheran Hospital to the out patient section, where the surgery would be done. This was a little puzzling, but being a nosy person I asked, "why go over there when I saw a door marked laser in the office". The answer I got was that the hospital had newer equipment and the doctor preferred to use it on the type of surgery I was to get.

We drove over to the hospital where the first thing required was to fill out and sign another batch of forms. Then I was turned over to a very pleasant nurse who led me to what I presumed was a prep room and put a drop in my eye. Then she noted something on her pad and brought over one of those plastic wrist bands, I guess so they would not get me mixed up with another patient. She only got it about half fastened when I started laughing. She made some remarks about those so-and-so bands that would only fasten half way and finally got another one that would fasten as it was supposed to. I sat there with those two bands on my arm and was finally led back to the treatment room.

That was a little confusing. Since I didn't know the first thing about laser, I expected to see a large bulky piece of equipment with a lot of dials and switches and flashing lights, but what I saw was a small apparatus with a chin and forehead rest similar to the examination equipment. My first thought was, "why do I need another examination."

In no time the technician had me sitting in a chair, my

chin on the rest and I think a strap around my forehead. She told me not to move.

The next five minutes were a little hazy. I do remember the doctor holding my eye lids apart and also little flashes of light, but no pain at all. I could hardly believe it when the doctor told me I could go but to come over to his office in two hours. I remember thinking, it just can't be over, because there is no pain. Nothing to do but take the doctor's word and leave.

Since we had two hours to kill and no pain to worry about, my driver and I decided we might as well find a restaurant and have lunch. After lunch we still had time to tour the Village of Coventry and get back to the office.

The exam back there was short, and I could hardly believe that I could read three lines lower on the eye chart than I could that morning. I was told to come back the next morning for another check, just to be sure nothing developed over night. Everything was fine the next day and the eye checked out with 20/20 vision. I was told to have my local optometrist check it out in a week, just to make sure everything was all right and to wait about a month before doing the other eye. I look forward to that without any worry because, just as I said before, "piece of cake"!

The Old Steam Trains

Kids are enchanted but take for granted
Those things they see every day,
But when they grow old, what memories they hold
Of the Days when their main thought was play.
There comes a day when we're old and grey
And we have those aches and pains.
We dream of the past we knew wouldn't last
And the roar of those old steam trains.

We dream of the smoke and the noise that woke
Us up in the middle of the night,
And the clank of the wheels of those ribbons of steel
And the glare of that big headlight.
The hobos who roam and call box cars their home
Would camp in the woods by the track.
The tales they would tell held us kids in a spell
With excitement that common things lack.

How we would run to see all the fun
When cattle were unloaded to feed.
We hoped we would see a steer breaking free
To test the trainmen's speed.
We walked the rails to find who fails
A sort of "macho" kids test.
Competition was high, but we had to try
To determine who, actually was best.

Empty cars on the siding were a good place for hiding

In our games of hide and go seek.
If that was too tame there was one other game
But walking car tops is not for the meek.
Those trains are gone but life goes on
With new things for kids to share
Like those trains of the past these new things
won't last
But the memories will always be there.

A Visit to School

Tedra Hemingway, who is a fourth grade teacher at the Watson Elementary School (and also my niece), asked me if I would come over on Thursday and talk to her class. She said she had read the class some of the stories from my book, *Looking Over the Shoulder,* and the kids seemed to like them and thought they would enjoy talking with me.

Like a fool, I agreed. Then I had to start thinking about what fourth graders might like to hear. I thought maybe something about how we lived back when I was their age might interest them. After writing and re-writing the story several times, I hoped they would be interested.

So I went over. The first thing I did was to get lost and had to ask someone how to get to her room. I think it was the principal that told me to go down this hall, turn left at the first hall, go down this hall to the first hall on the right and it would be the second door at the far end of the hall. Something like that.

I finally found the room and when she saw me looking through the glass door, she said something to the kids and they all jumped up and started moving tables. She had it all arranged for me to sit in a big overstuffed chair and the kids were to sit on the floor around the chair.

Well, we finally got all arranged and I was ready to start but Tedra said, "Wait a minute." About the same time the door opened and another teacher brought her class in and sat them around the floor.

I was sure it would be impossible for that many kids, I would guess about forty, to sit quiet and listen to some old

codger talk about the days when he was a kid, but you know, those kids sat there as quiet as little stumps and never moved until I got done telling them about living without electric lights, television, VCR's, refrigerators and microwave ovens.

They were even interested when I told them about walking a mile to school, how strict the teachers were, swimming in the creek, hopping bobsleds, sleeping on straw ticks and the home remedies we had to take for colds and other illnesses.

I think the boys were most interested when I told them how to make a slingshot and how to use it on the neighbors cats and dogs and the farmer's cows. I was going to tell them about making corn cob pipes and smoking corn silk but I was afraid the teachers would frown on that, so I didn't mention it.

After about twenty minutes of talking I made the mistake of asking whether anyone wanted to ask any questions and about thirty hands went up.

I had a problem hearing the questions because the battery in my stupid hearing aid lost its juice and those kids talked very soft (to me that denotes good training), but the teachers helped me out and we had a great time. One question I especially remember was, "Did I have any fights when I was in school?" I think I told them I tried to avoid fights because I was so small I would have gotten the tar knocked out of me. I had to laugh at the next question from another boy, "Did you ever beat the tar out of another boy?"

The kids and I were having a great time, they asking the questions and me trying to answer them, when the teachers thought it was time to quit. I guess they thought we might be getting too far from the approved principles of good

education. I was amazed at how well behaved, how attentive those kids were and how sharp their questions were. It showed me that we still have some dedicated teachers in our school system.

Tedra sent one little boy to lead me out of the building and he asked questions all the way out. One I remember, "Do you still smoke a pipe?" I had to answer yes, bit I did add that it is a dirty, stinking habit so don't you ever start! I hope he remembers that.

There is a nice P.S. to this story. The very next day I received one of the nicest surprises I have had for quite awhile. I got a letter from one of the girls in Tedra's class, saying she enjoyed my visit along with about a dozen questions. I haven't answered it yet, but I am certainly going to.

I loved it!!!!

Back to High School

Back in 1994 I got a call from Mrs. Kerkton, the freshman English teacher at DeKalb High School. She asked if I would come out and talk to her class. She said she had read some of the stories from the book on Auburn Junction and the class seemed to enjoy them and thought they would be interested if they could talk to me. I told her I would try to work something up that might hold their interest.

Now I was in another bind! I had to do some serious thinking about what would interest today's high school generation. Since they were just starting high school I thought they might be interested in my days in school at the old McIntosh high School on south Main Street in Auburn.

I finally was able to put together some stories about high school in the late twenties that I could read, and if we had a little time before the period ended, we could have a question period.

You know, I am often wrong about how things might turn out and I was wrong this time! When I went into the class room the class was all sitting in a semicircle with a single chair out in front in the middle. It was then that the teacher told me that the students would interview me and then write a biographical story of the interview.

I was stumped. Talked off the cuff, for me was harder than reading a prepared paper, but since the class was ready to start, I couldn't back out now.

I think I stumbled over the first question asked. "What was my birth date?", and I mis-stated and answered January first, instead of the third. After that we got along just fine.

They asked me some pretty sharp questions and I tried to answer them truthfully. There were taking notes of every answer!

I guess they talked about that class for several days and the teacher sent me a copy of each of their interviews and they were great. Not because I was involved, but how they made notes and then wrote up all we had talked about. Some were written as well or better than items you see in the papers every day. It was a "shot in the arm" for this old man, and made me believe that our nation will be in good shape when this generation takes over!!!

Ailments

I recently made an appointment with my doctor for my usual six month physical check up. I decided I better read up a little about some of the ailments that might affect persons my age. In the medical book I found such things as colitis, bronchitis, bursitis, hepatitis and arthritis. Although I am not a medical doctor, I began to wonder why they all ended with :"itis"? I thought it might indicate they were all associated with older people.

The doctor told me he could find nothing out of "kilter", but I still kept thinking about the "itis" ailments that were not in the medical books or mentioned by the doctor.

For the sake of other old folks who might be worried about these ailments that were omitted from the medical books, I have listed the causes and cures that might be of interest to a few of them.

Tv-itis: This is very easy to catch if your favorite program comes on at the same time you just have to sweep and dust. The cure is fairly simple. Just do your household cleaning during the commercials. There are usually plenty of them and they are long enough to get the job done and still see the program.

Doze-itis: This is very contagious and usually occurs when you lean back in your recliner and try to read a dull book. It sometimes comes on when you start to watch a rerun of *Little House* or *Matlock.* The only cure found so far is to put the book down or turn off the TV. Just lean back and enjoy a good nap!

Checkout-itis: Doctors have determined that this is

caused by standing in the fast check out lane and some lady ahead of you writes out a check for two items and then has to balance her check book before picking up her purchases. There is a cure for this, but I would be ashamed to use that kind of language in a public place.

Mushroom-itis: This is a VERY serious ailment and is usually caused by tramping through about fifty acres of woods and not finding any morels. The only cure found to date is finding a bag full in the next half mile you walk.

Fishing-itis: This is another serious ailment and usually occurs after your third fishing trip without catching any fish. The only known cure is to keep fishing until you bring home a nice stringer of fish. That quickly takes care of that ailment but does not guarantee that it will ever happen again.

Nail-itis: This is a common ailment of amateur carpenters. It starts when you are driving nails and bend three in a row. Id doesn't cure, but it does help to talk those nails to be careful. Not to talk to loud or you will offend the neighbors.

Measure-itis: This occurs when you measure wrong and the board you sawed is too short. Cutting that board into kindling should help a little but talking to it, as you do the nails, might be a better therapy.

Forget-itis: This can be caused by a large number of things. For example, when you leave the lid off the percolator. Folks over eighty are more prone to contract this ailment than younger people. There isn't any cure for this, but the surgeon general is pushing research so it can be tried out on our Congressmen and their campaign promises.

Telephone-itis: This usually comes on when the telephone rings just as the cops are about to make an arrest on

your favorite detective show and some lady wants to know whether you house needs new windows or siding. A very short answer and slamming the phone down with a bang quickly cures this ailment.

Mosquito-itis: This is very easy to catch if you enjoy waling in the woods on a summers evening. There are three possible cures that might help. One, stay out of the woods. Two, use a lot of dope and heavy clothes. And three, fill your pockets full of sand so they can't carry you off bodily.

I am not a doctor or researcher, but all the cures suggested have been tried out in actual practice and have caused no serious side effects.

Christmas at Gene's

'Twas the day before Christmas
And all through the house
Shirley was cleaning
Without help from her spouse.

The menu was planned
For the dinner next day
And the turkey was thawing
On a refrigerator tray.

Meat balls were made
By the hard working spouse
To save his status
As Nan of the house.

Pies were baked
And set out to cool
You're not dared to touch them
You can just look and drool.

If you ever ate dinner
At Shirley and Gene's
You know there'll be more
Than hot dogs and beans.

You sit at the table
where food is piled high
and you eat like a pig
But save room for the pie.

There are so many things
That the holidays mean
But the best one is dinner

At Shirley and Gene's!!!

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Every kind of mischief in the history of America was tried by the boys of the Auburn Junction in the first few years of this century, or at least it seems so when one reads Floyd Link's fine and detailed memories of Auburn Junction. This tiny village of a few hundred people, at the junction of the railroad tracks, contained a canning factory, a kraut factory, a gas factory, a filling station, a hotel and restaurant. What really made the town function though, were the families who lived within the frame farmhouses along the gravel roads. Annie, "Fat" Frank the drinking man, Henry the store-keeper and of course, the kids - overrunning the yards, overturning the privies, smoking corn silk in home-made shacks and throwing taffy balls at the ceiling during a candy party. These and other delightful recollections can be found in Mr Link's previous book, "Looking Over the Shoulder - Tales of Auburn Junction." A keeper book for anyone interested in re-experiencing life exactly as it was in a unique village in a time long gone by . . .

About the author . . . Floyd Link was born in Auburn Junction in 1913 and lived twenty-two years there, moving to Auburn when he married the former Orphelia Smith in 1935. Most of his working years were spent in toy manufacturing, many with the Auburn Rubber Company. Floyd is the father of two sons and the grandfather of four girls. While he enjoys his out-of-doors hobbies, Floyd is also an accomplished wood smith. A man of many talents and a sense of wit to match!